

## RELIGION AND SOCIAL POLICY

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objects which yielded increase by the natural process of growth.<sup>41</sup> Archbishop GrindaPs injunctions to the laity of the Province of York (1571) expressly emphasized the duty of presenting to the Ordinary those who lend and demand back more than the principal, whatever the guise under which the transaction may be concealed.\*<sup>1</sup> Bishops' articles of visitation down to the Civil War required the presentation of uncharitable persons and usurers, together with drunkards, ribalds, swearers and sorcerers.<sup>47</sup> The rules to be observed in excommunicating the impenitent promulgated in 1585, the Canons of the Province of Canterbury in 1604, and of the Irish Church in 1634, all included a provision that the usurer should be subjected to ecclesiastical discipline.<sup>48</sup>

The activity of the ecclesiastical courts had not ceased with the Reformation, and they continued throughout the last half of the century to play an important, if increasingly unpopular, part in the machinery of local government. In addition to enforcing the elementary social obligation of charity, by punishing the man who refused to "pay to the poor men's box," or who was "detected for being an uncharitable person and for not giving to the poor and impotent/\*<sup>4B</sup> they dealt also, at least in theory, with those who offended

against  
Christian morality by acts of extortion. The  
jurisdic-  
tion of the Church in these matters was  
expressly  
reserved by legislation; and ecclesiastical  
lawyers,  
while lamenting the encroachments of the  
common  
law courts, continued to claim certain  
economic mis-  
demeanours as their province. That, in  
spite of the  
rising tide of opposition, the references to  
questions  
of this kind in articles of visitation were  
not wholly  
an affair of common form, is suggested by  
the protests  
against the interference of the clergy in  
matters of  
business, and by the occasional cases which  
show that  
commercial transactions continued to be  
brought be-  
fore the ecclesiastical courts. The typical  
usurer was